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DRAMA

The Quarterly Theatre Review

NEW SERIES

SUMMER 1953

NUMBER 29

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COVER DESIGN BY FELIKS TOPOLSKI

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A BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE PUBLICATION

FELIKS TOPOLSKI is designing the decor for Ronald Duncan's new "Don Juan." The play covers a tremendous range, from bawdy wit in the opening carnival to moving tragedy in the Statue's mausoleum. These preliminary "scribbles" show a conception freely based on the Napoleonic period. The world premiere of the production by E. Martin Broume is at the new Taw and Torridge Festival, Bideford, Devon.



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Editorial

"Theatre Ownership"

UNDER this title the Federation of Theatre Unions publishes the results of its specially commissioned research into facts about our theatre buildings. This valuable piece of work appears to have been carried out with care and exactitude. The details of the picture drawn are always changing, but the general pattern of theatre-ownership has not altered since research was completed two years ago, and is not likely to change unless it is affected by forces outside what is now correctly termed the Theatre Industry.

The Survey deals only with houses presenting "live" entertainment. While it reveals the serious losses of buildings occasioned by the coming of the "talkies" and the slump of the early 1930s, its main interest is in the tenure of the buildings which remain. Since those days there has been a great concentration of ownership accompanied by the interweaving of "bricks-and-mortar" interests with those of play-production; the small "Group," as the Survey calls it, who control twenty of the forty-two theatres now operating in the West End, and thirty-four of the fifty-three "No. 1" theatres in the provinces, has built up its present position chiefly since 1942. It justifies its pre-eminence on the whole by maintaining the highest consistent level of entertainment to be found in Britain. But this does not alter the fact that the form of control exercised tends increasingly to restrict the freedom of other participants in the industry and to cut "live" entertainment more and more to the most profitable pattern.

The "bricks-and-mortar men" have gained more power because of the shortage of buildings, and the Survey shows how they have learnt to deal with producing managements on a "heads-I-win-tails-you-lose" system. The level of profit declared is not as high as

might be expected, though information is seldom full. The safety and the power of such management lies in the multiplicity of its interests.

In a country dominated by this "commercial" theatre, it is hard for theatres run on other principles to become established. We have seen the struggles at the Old Vic, at Bristol and in the major "Reps." We have long looked forward to a National Theatre; if we build it soon, as we should, its function will be to set the standard for the practice of theatre art in Britain. But it will have to live in the same world with the commercial managements and, in the last resort, only the eternal vigilance of the theatre-loving public will ensure that the commercial theatre acts as a spur, not a brake, to its development.

Repertory Enterprise

A number of "Reps" in provincial centres produce new plays from time to time. These seldom receive the notice given in the national press to "try-out" theatres. But the plays would often be worth the attention of other companies, and we plan to publish short lists periodically.

Some Contributors

James Laver is Keeper, Departments of Engraving, Illumination, and Design, and of Painting, at the Victoria and Albert Museum. A large proportion of his published work, which is devoted to costume, denotes a special interest in the theatre. He writes on a subject appropriate to Coronation time; and so, from another point of view, does Anne Ridler. Besides lyric poetry, she has published two books of plays, *The Shadow Factory* and *Henry Bly*. Christopher le Fleming has composed music for many different plays, including the Southwark Cathedral play in the Festival of Britain. Rosamond Gilder was Editor of *Theatre Arts* and is one of New York's most distinguished critics. We welcome the fine actor-manager, John Clements, as a reviewer.

THE COSTUME OF THE MASQUE

by James Laver

The illustrations are from sketches for costumes of the masque by INIGO JONES, chosen from the hundreds of designs by the master which are preserved at Chatsworth House, the seat of the Duke of Devonshire. They are reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement.



PENTHESILEA, Queen of the Amazons, to be played by the Countess of Bedford in "The Masque of Queens."

THE early history of the English theatre—especially so far as its costume and décor are concerned—has always been something of a puzzle to the student. Even to-day when the purely literary approach to Shakespeare has been largely abandoned, it is very difficult to find a straightforward account of the exact way in which the plays were presented. Were they, as scholars formerly thought, completely different from the Masques at Whitehall? If they were not, the problem is somewhat simplified, for we do happen to know something of both the costume and the settings of these courtly entertainments from early in the reign of James I until about the outbreak of the Civil War.

From 1604 until 1640, Inigo Jones was continuously employed at Court, first in some subordinate capacity, then as Surveyor of Works to Henry, Prince of Wales, and finally as Surveyor General to the King. He was, of course, primarily an architect, but in those days an architect's duties comprised many tasks beside the designing of buildings; and fortunately he left behind him an ample documentation of his theatrical work. A large proportion of his great collection of designs has been preserved intact, for he bequeathed it to John Webb, his assistant and nephew by marriage, and from Webb's descendants the bulk of the collection passed to the Earl of Burlington at Chiswick, and from him to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth. From the costume designs, which, as we know from contemporary records, the evidence of Ben Jonson and others, were actually realised, we are able to form a very complete idea of the clothes worn in the early seventeenth century for the Masques at Court.

Inigo Jones had learned his craft in Italy, and it so happened that when he visited that country he was able to take advantage of the real revolution in theatrical design inaugurated at

Florence in 1589 by Bernardo Buontalenti delle Girandole. This, of course, was in the previous generation and it was therefore from Buontalenti's successor, Giulio Parigi, that Inigo learned most. Indeed, it has been established that no less than five of his Masques bear direct traces of the influences of Giulio Parigi's most important production *Il Giuddizio di Paride*. This is no reflection on Inigo Jones. That great artist brought to his work a real ingenuity and inspiration which prevent any of his designs from being mere copies. David, Davenant, Townshend and—until their unfortunate quarrel—Ben Jonson, have nothing but the highest praise for his talent and invention. If we did not have their categorical statements, as well as such contemporary records as the Royal Accounts, it would be difficult for us to credit the splendour and elaboration of the clothes he devised. But we possess, in addition to the designs for the actual costumes worn by King James and Anne of Denmark, and King Charles and Henrietta Maria, a series of some 300 drawings, varying from the roughest first sketch by Jones himself to a detailed and careful design by some assistant for the completed dress. There is a tradition that the famous miniaturist, Peter Oliver, made some of the drawings for masque costumes, and it may be that some eight exquisite designs in pen and body colour with gold and silver ornament are his.

The Masque was a highly artificial and stylised entertainment. The Puritans of all ages—some of them are still with us—would certainly have condemned it as escapist. It was an escape both in time and space, but of course the study of what costumes had actually been worn in the past, and what costumes were actually worn in distant lands, was still in its infancy. Artists were still too ignorant to be pedants and their mere lack of documentation allowed them to give rein to their fancy. Like the majority of those who

witnessed their entertainments, if a costume was of "long ago" they imagined that it must have been Roman, and if it was a costume of "far away" they imagined it as Turkish.



OBERON is probably the character represented in this sketch for costume in the masque "Oberon and the Fairy Prince."

Roman or Turkish modes, transported to an imaginary world in which Roman ladies might very well be furnished with a ruff, and Turkish warriors with a doublet, form the main themes of the Masque wardrobe, just as they had done for the Florentine *Intermezzi*, and were to do for the court ballets of Louis XIV. Many of Inigo's male characters, especially if they were

playing "noble" parts, wore a modification of the Roman warrior's tunic; the women wore a slightly classical version of the dress of their own class, suitably fantasicated, and sometimes with a degree of décolletage which the modern mind associates more readily with the *Folies Bergère* than with a Court entertainment. Some of the costumes, especially those worn by the King and Queen and the great nobles, were extremely rich and must have cost their wearers very considerable sums of money.

Apart, however, from the formal parade, the Masque included also a number of humorous interludes, and these gave more scope for fancy. Here we find the artist making use of Elizabethan and even of medieval costumes, as well as of animal disguises. In one of the "Antimasques" we even find an "Indian Man" with a bow slung at his back and a crown of upstanding feathers. Another figure, although described as Indian, has a pagoda-like head-dress and extremely long finger-nails. It must be one of the first examples of pseudo-Chinese costume in theatrical history. Merlin, in *Britannia Triumphans*, performed in 1638, wears a slashed and beplumed turban, but this is what we have already noted as "Turkish" costume.

In some of the Antimasques the lower classes are introduced, of course as comic characters, a convention which the English stage and screen has even yet not completely outgrown. Thus we have designs for the costumes of a "Porter," a "Vintner's Boy," and a "Kitchenmaid." And in the description of some of the comic characters in *Britannia Triumphans* there is an entry which must excite the imagination of all those who are interested in the history of the theatre:—

In the bottom row on the left is a Mountebanke's man or Zany. . . . Cap, with two feathers and long peak, drawn over his brow; loose blouse with hanging sleeves and baggy trousers. Next to him is . . . a figure with beard and moustaches.



A TORCH-BEARER in "The Memorable Maske of the Two Honourable Houses."

Flat cap; long loose jacket, with sleeves covering hands; and trousers. Inscribed, "harlekin." On the right is a Clown with moustaches and peaked beard. Close round cap or hood, loose jacket with large round buttons and belt, and trousers. Inscribed, "John Farino."

Thus we see all the figures of the *Commedia dell'Arte* suddenly appearing in the Whitehall Masques; for Gian Farino was a character in the improvised Italian Comedy. He survives into our own day as Pierrot with his floured face and his big buttons or pompoms. Harlequin and Zany need no comment.

In the Masque entitled *Salmacida Spolia* we find "a Pedant of Francolin" described as "a tall, thin man. . . Long nose and pointed chin. Close cap with upturned brim. Tight-fitting doublet with large round buttons, short trunk-hose, slashed and pulled, and tights. Long cloak falling to knees." What is this but the familiar *Il Dottore*? So here is valuable evidence that the *Commedia dell'Arte* characters had penetrated to the courtly Masque and had become part of the stock-in-trade of early seventeenth century theatrical convention.

Even to-day, with the aid of the surviving drawings of Inigo Jones, it is possible to reconstruct, in our imaginations, the kind of entertainment which delighted the Stuart monarchs and their courtiers. There survives also the very room in which such entertainments were presented: the Banqueting Hall of Whitehall built by Inigo Jones and the only portion of his vast project for a palace ever to be realised. In his day the "old Palace of Whitehall" was a jumble of buildings running from Scotland Yard along the river, crossing the road (by means of a great Tudor gateway destroyed at the end of the eighteenth century) and occupying the site of the present Treasury. Rambling stables and other outbuildings linked it with St. James's Palace. Nearly all of this has been swept away, but we can still imagine the great Banqueting Hall itself with its painted ceiling and with a primitive kind of proscenium arch erected at one end. Behind this arch was a scene constructed according to the new principles of theatrical perspective. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the action took place entirely within this scenic frame. The actors, especially the royal and noble ones, were for ever "coming out of the picture" and descending the steps (which we can see in Inigo's drawings) to parade or dance "on the floor of the house." And when they were weary of dancing they sat down in chairs in what would now be the

fifth row of the stalls and watched the comics performing their antics.

With soft candlelight and the more lurid glare of torches falling upon the rich stuffs, and reflected back again from the facets of the jewels in a thousand gleams, with the string music, helped out by pipe and tabor, weaving its spell, with the solemn grace of the dancers, the nobility of the men's bearing, and the alabaster white of the women's shoulders and bosoms, a Masque at Whitehall must have been a real enchantment. But the storm clouds were gathering. *The Queene of*



THOMYRSIS, Queen of Stygia; the costume to be worn by the Countess of Montgomery in "The Masque of Queens."

Arragon is the last Masque of which we have any record of scenes and costumes. The troubles of the Civil War put an end for ever to this form of courtly entertainment.

Ritual and Drama

by Anne Ridler

THE Coronation ritual still has power to move us as a drama, whatever we may feel about the use which is being made of it for commercial ends. And this may lead us to think again about the connection between the developed dramatic art and the ritual from which it sprang. Our own drama, as we know, had its origins in the ceremony of the Mass; and surely every play of lasting worth must share something of the character of ritual.

Ritual is essentially a dramatisation, a putting into active—one might say bodily—form, of the emotions of the heart. It helps us to express the feelings which would otherwise be inexpressible; the consciousness of self, too, which can be such a heavy burden, is taken up and transformed into gesture and word, performed by others and by the worshipper himself. In the Mediaeval Mystery Plays the drama is very near to pure ritual worship and adoration, yet we can all identify the emotions of these characters with our own. This quality can be found in secular drama also. I should say that the famous scene of the death of the Mother in *Peer Gynt* performed the same miracle, releasing our emotions of fear and awe at death by the acting out of a kind of ritual, and giving us the sense that we have taken part in actions, simple in themselves, which can yet speak for our whole being and express a mystery beyond our understanding.

I would not imply that the functions of ritual and of the drama are exactly the same by any means. Religious ritual is first for the glory of God, and all other effects are secondary. Some of those secondary effects may be the same: the effect of tragedy is, according to Aristotle in the *Poetics*, to purge our minds through pity and terror, and it is by the partial identification of our-

selves with the figure on the stage that the purgation is achieved. But it is *partial* identification; here is one difference, apart from the difference of purpose: in liturgy our absorption can be complete. In drama it is only complete at a very primitive stage. What happens when it is complete at a supposedly higher degree of civilisation is shown in the effect produced in America by "soap-opera," the interminable broadcast serials to which thousands listen devotedly every day. All sorts of stories are current of the way in which listeners identify the serials with their own lives and with real events: for instance, when one character was supposed to be falsely accused of murder, a woman wrote in to the broadcasting company offering to come and give evidence at his trial, as she had been listening in on Thursday and knew who had really done the crime. And in England it is the same. Whenever a character in *Mrs. Dale's Diary* is supposed to be having a baby, women listeners are sure to send in woolly booties and vests which they have knitted.

I am not maintaining that all drama should aspire to the condition of ritual, but only that this is the life-giving root, and the source of some of its most poignant moments. For what is Othello's "Put out the light, and then put out the light" but a ritual, played with a candle and a human life? What is Ford's scene in *The Broken Heart*, where Calantha continues to dance as the news of one catastrophe after another is brought to her, but a ritual of despair? Every action in ritual, every sentence said, has a meaning beyond its obvious import; and so it is with dramatic symbols. A ritual is an accepted form, the invariable means for a particular purpose; so is a dramatic convention. Both are inimical to the

naturalistic drama—a drama, that is, which seeks to give as nearly as possible the illusion of real everyday happenings on the stage. There are conventions in naturalistic drama, but its aim is to reduce them to a minimum. Our drama, from the time of the miracle plays, moved steadily towards naturalism, but the Elizabethans were close enough to these early plays to inherit much of their formal quality. Mr. S. L. Bethell in his book *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* maintains that the Elizabethan audience were able to give a most complex response to the plays, seeing a character at one moment as a conventional type, standing for certain fixed qualities, and at another as a human being, imitated in all its variability; and enjoying moments when the players themselves would step out of the play-world and allude to the play as a play. (Such a moment, one of the most complex, is when Cleopatra, thinking of herself as she would suffer in a Roman triumph, dreads to see

"Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness

I' the posture of a whore"—

a most daring trick for Shakespeare to play, when you remember that Cleopatra herself would be acted by a squeaking boy.) The audience were not for one moment allowed to lose this dual consciousness. The congregation at Mass possesses something of this dual awareness—of the ceremony as a ceremony performed in a certain church at a certain time, and of its eternal meaning. But at the supreme point of the Mass, as was suggested earlier, ritual and the play part company, for at the receiving of bread and wine the dual consciousness (and the dramatic comparison of God and the soul) is resolved into communion.

It was not until after the Puritan revolution, when the theatres had been closed for some years and the more physically dramatic forms of the liturgy must have faded from general memory, that the drama wholly lost the qualities

which it had derived from worship. The theatre had passed into the province of the World and, for some, of the Flesh and the Devil too. Conventions remain in the Restoration and eighteenth-century drama, but they seem to have lost their meaning and to be so clearly a fortuitous survival, that it is no wonder the aside and soliloquy got a bad name, and were considered by such a critic as William Archer to be merely an excuse for slipshod writing. In the nineteenth century, some poets tried to return to the earlier tradition, but those who did so were either without knowledge of the theatre or, like Beddoes, wrote without intention of performance. Shelly's *Cenci* and Beddoes's *Death's Jest Book* are two wonderful works which sprang from this attempt, but they are essentially by-products, and cannot affect the main argument.

So religion and drama were divorced, and each was the loser, but perhaps drama suffered most. Religion lost a useful tool, in her task of making the life of the spirit real and important to men, but she could not lose her central drama; secular drama, however, lost the life-giving root. In our attempts to heal the separation, there is often a certain ineffectiveness and self-consciousness—something of the same malady that attacks us when we try to start new communities in garden cities—either there is no pub, or else one is placed with far too refined an intention. Before the divorce, no one wondered overmuch about irreverence and unsuitability and the things that bother us. I should doubt if it would be possible for a modern play on a religious theme to introduce a character who could address Almighty God as Cain did in one of the miracle plays: "Hi," as he says, "Hi, who is that hob over the wall? We! who was that that piped so small?" Henri Ghéon comes near to it in his play *Christmas in the Market Place*, about a family of gipsies who stage their own interpretation of the Christmas story. Such plays bring

the Nativity home to our common and ignominious lives. Yet Ghéon's play has been a source of scandal in at least one parish where it was played—which only goes to show that audiences are in need of education.

I am not here concerned to argue the relative merits of poetry and prose, though obviously if you discard poetry you discard the natural technique for incantation and for speaking the truth. I am more concerned with the use of dramatic symbols—as you find them in the plays of Charles Williams, for instance, or of W. B. Yeats. In Yeats's *Purgatory* there are only two characters, an old man and a boy, yet how much of human life is implied by the wonder-

ful use of symbolism: by the window which looks back into the old man's past and out into his present hell (hell, it should be, not purgatory); and by the tree which is like a purified soul.

It does not matter whether the subject of the drama is a specifically religious one or not: the liturgical basis is found in plays on such differing themes as are *The Family Reunion*, *Sea of Adam*, *The Ascent of F6*, and *This Way to the Tomb*. All these plays draw strength from the use of incantation, from physical symbols which tell us what we could not otherwise understand, and from the sense of a Power invoked, which is beyond the finite beings of the actors.

PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

by J. W. Lambert

I READ somewhere the other day that along with all its other ills the theatre is now suffering from an excess of too indulgent criticism. This is nonsense, unless one is a perfectionist, or an axe-grinder; but it is true that we critics, hungry for quality, slaving expectantly as the curtain rises, are eager to find nourishment in almost anything, and apt to describe a passable rissole as though it were a delicious grilled cutlet.

To speak of anything Graham Greene writes as a rissole would be going too far, no doubt; and indeed we shall be lucky if we get a better play this year than his first, *The Living Room*. It is, theatrically speaking, extremely effective; the climate is bleak, as might have been expected, but no more so than in a comparable piece, *The Deep Blue Sea*. An emotional tangle from which there is no way out is the subject of both plays, but Mr. Greene does not, as Mr. Rattigan did, sideslip into a more or less happy ending. His Rose is a girl innocent in every way, brought up as a Catholic and living in a rabidly Catholic household; when she falls in

love with a married man more than twice her age, she glimpses an unguessed-at ecstasy; but the Church, and her own eyes when she sees her lover and his wife together, tell her that it is not for her. And so she takes the step which the distracted wife had threatened, and kills herself, babbling a childish prayer.

Several interesting ambiguities are worked into this situation to persuade us that we have had our intellectual money's worth. The play's setting is a skilful exercise in the horrid-picturesque: a decaying house run by Rose's aunt, a woman all but mad, played with statuesque, lumbering power by Violet Farebrother. It includes another aunt, cowed and twittering in Mary Jerrold's hands, and an uncle, a crippled priest chafing at his own uselessness. Alone inclined to self-pity, this brooding solitary is in his duels with Rose's lover cool and almost patronising—understandably so, since that harassed man, rather stuffily played by John Robinson, is the modern Aunt Sally, the psychologist who cannot control his own mental

processes. Wary with one sister, the priest is tender and fatherly with the other; and with Rose he is stern, compassionate, inflexible, grief-stricken. Eric Portman, even in a wheel-chair, radiates such an air of authority that it is difficult to believe he would have

rebellious pain of an agonised child, with lovely sureness.

All the other new plays have unquestionably been rissoles, and only two deserve attention. Roger MacDougall is a disappointing dramatist, so far; he tantalises us with the suggestion that



DOROTHY TUTIN and ERIC PORTMAN in "The Living Room" at Wyndham's Theatre, London. Photograph by Angus McBean.

submitted for twenty years to the domination of his crazy sister; but his is an hypnotic performance, which in the scenes with Rose, in which he fails both her and himself, lifts the play above the level of exciting emotional drama. And Dorothy Tutin rises to the occasion. No longer a charming minx, but a pretty, quite ordinary girl, she ranges through infinite regret, and the

he is a first-class recruit to the Shaw-Bridie school, then cheerfully lapses into the commonplaces of domestic comedy. The wrangling between husband and wife which occupies so much of *Escapade* is irredeemably wearisome, clumsily overworked, in spite of Nigel Patrick's skill and charm. The idea of the spirited children of a pugnacious pacifist making their own

flamboyant (and useless) gesture for peace is serviceable as a basis for ironic comedy; Mr. MacDougall spoils it by allowing sentiment to creep in. Still, his second act is one of the best things to be seen in London. There is, too, some fine acting—from Alec McCowen as a loquacious and disrespectful boy; from Ernest Clark, who, as a headmaster, welds a part which is part-farcical, part-serious into a memorable whole; and from Hugh Griffith, shambling, sleazy and spirituous, gloriously larger than life as usual, as a down-at-heel journalist.

Far from over-praised, *The White Carnation* has been sniffed at from altogether too great a height; it is a sentimental farce, no more, and as such gently amusing. No doubt Sir Ralph Richardson was made for higher things, but he does give an astonishing illustration of how one man can carry a play. As a self-made stockbroker haunting in a puzzled way the house outside which he was killed by a flying bomb, and learning a few home truths in the process, he keeps the fragile fable in a strong man's grip. He appears to make no effort of characterisation; his mannerisms are as marked as ever—he sways, he grunts, he semaphores at random, he gyrates wildly from time to time. Yet he holds us, steers us, even touches our hearts with acting which is a sort of prolonged conjuring trick.

* * *

There has been a flourishing crop of revivals, although the Arts Theatre has been somewhat in eclipse: its most interesting production brought Wilfrid Lawson powerfully back to the London stage in Strindberg's *The Father*, but I cannot feel that this admired piece is more than *grand guignol*. On the strength of Mr. Wolfit's production and performance one might say the same of *Macbeth*, which at Hammersmith looked to me like a burlesque acted in terms of nineteenth-century melodrama, with Macbeth himself as the bad Baronet. But Mr. Wolfit still shows

flashes of greatness amid the encircling gloom of his managerial policy: his Oedipus is certainly the equal of Sir Laurence Olivier's, and at Colonus he gave Sophocles' static postscript a fine rage and resignation; his Lear is still magnificent, his Shylock a fine malignant creation, full of brutish, oozing beastliness. His fixed expression of bullish fury while he listened to the quality of mercy speech may well be due to Rosalind Iden's schoolmarmish delivery, but it is undeniably tremendous.

It would have been pleasant to draw a few neat comparisons between the wit of Wilde and that of Congreve, but the revival of *A Woman of No Importance*, despite Paul Dehn's deft revision, requires treatment rather as a sort of fashion parade. It is very taking to the eye, all feathers and fans, rose-bedecked busts, golden, olive-green and scarlet splendour. Athene Seyler chuckles enchantingly; Isabel Jeans soars adenoidenally through her cynical monologue on marriage, and Clive Brook comports himself with distinction.

The Way of the World is a collection of sparkling scenes rather than a play; in Mr. Gielgud's generous and intelligent production they were mostly very effective. Pamela Brown's Millamant certainly deserved to be judged on its own merits; she was a glittering creature, but too tense, in a way careful; the inner spirit of delight was missing, and her mannerisms claimed too much attention—her way of standing with her head over her shoulder, chin up, eyes down, as though she were trying to examine the small of her back, and the habit she shares with Michael Redgrave of spitting out her consonants as though they were cherry-stones. Mr. Gielgud's proprietorial grace was somewhat marred for me by a pale yellow make-up with grey lips; but Paul Scofield's Wittwoud was an uproarious flutter of laces and grimaces. And then, of course, there was Margaret Rutherford: clucking, gobbling, gasping, groaning, prinking and pouting,

scandalous and scandalised, her chin the untaken standard of a defeated army, her eyes unresting mirrors of dismay, Lady Wishfort pursued her stratagems with gallant hopelessness;

unable to speak Congreve's prose: some such complaint is always made when actors attempt anything new. It was made, *mutatis mutandis*, of Herbert Lomas as John of Gaunt, and of Robin



ROBERT DONAT with WILLIAM SQUIRE in Robert Helpmann's production of "Murder in the Cathedral" at the Old Vic. Photograph by Houston Rogers.

and the unstressed hint of pathos, which Miss Rutherford was able to find even in Miss Prism, was here too.

She was, of course, accused of being out of period, and even, absurdly,

Bailey as Mark Antony in the Old Vic's *Julius Caesar*. In fact, the vigour and slightly apprehensive urgency with which Mr. Bailey addressed the Roman mob were worth any amount of melli-

fluous reciting, fitted in well with Hugh Hunt's roustabout production, and off-set William Devlin's bearded Brutus, a rather glum and furtive figure. Paul Rogers's Cassius, impatiently biting his knuckles, dominated the play in spite of looking more like a hangdog monk than a Roman.

The Old Vic's real triumph has been Robert Helpmann's production of *Murder in the Cathedral*. This is a play which has won deserved success in the hands of Mr. Martin Browne; but what with one thing and another I have never seen his production. Coming fresh to this one, I rather expected to be at once bored and interested, concerned to explore, in the light of this early experiment, what modern verse can hope to do in the theatre; but I found myself too much moved to bother about that. Mr. Helpmann was especially successful with the shifting formal aspects of the play. The Shavian interlude, in which the four knights, led by Paul Rogers, took off the ridiculous helmets they were made to wear and justified themselves in the light of history, was truly surprising, extremely funny, and cunningly modulated. Those wailing women of Canterbury Mr. Helpmann treated as individuals; their lines (very odd lines, some of them) played round the stage like the plaintive voices of birds, but in the climaxes gathered and broke over us like a wave of supplication. And behind them, above them, stood Becket. To state a shortcoming first, there was not enough arrogance in Robert Donat's archbishop. Becket was not, in the light of Mr. Eliot's text, a likeable man—probably few saints are—but Mr. Donat presented an inexhaustible well of unclinging charity. This was occasionally disconcerting—the burst of self-dramatisation at the end of the Christmas sermon seemed, in such a man, wildly out of character; but the radiance of Mr. Donat's conception, shining through nobility of voice and bearing, offered a rare refreshment to the heart.

MUSIC in the Theatre

by Christopher le Fleming

THE relationship between music and drama at the present time is chaotic. This is my opinion after spending a good deal of time on the Tom Tiddler's-ground where they meet. Sometimes their uneasy partnership has been successful; more often it has seemed tenuous and unsatisfactory—at least to the musicians of the party.

From the musician's point of view the most satisfactory relationship between music and drama is to be found in opera. Music there becomes reconciled with the time, place and period of the play, and has its part in creating a community of actors, singers, artists and technicians dedicated to a common cause. Until lately England chose to import opera from abroad rather than to cultivate her own operatic tradition. A land without opera is, metaphorically, a land that has lived through an artistic Reformation and suffered the consequent unhappy divisions. Sectarian interests abound and flourish. The singers go before—the minstrels follow after. Musicians busy themselves with music, actors with the play, and both are precluded from seeing the whole. A great many plays lack the music that would touch them with an added richness; too many potential operas (music-dramas if you will) freeze into choral music and Cantatas. Between the two, the ballet-dancers flit in gorgeous array; to them at least the unification of music and drama is not only an ideal but also a daily reality.

Readers of DRAMA may have scant sympathy for a musician's plea for an operatic Restoration. They may feel with the writer in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 1692 that

"Other nations bestow the name of Opera on plays whereof every note is sung. But experience hath taught us that our English genius will not relish that perpetual singing."

It was, of course, to meet this resistance on the part of English audiences that light opera, with its occasional leavening of spoken dialogue, became so popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From it evolved musical comedy and the current type of spectacular musical production. But, with all their vitality and entertainment value, these represent only one aspect of theatre music.

Other nations than England have also failed to "relish that perpetual singing," yet have contrived to make the fullest use of music in the theatre. Sibelius wrote, for a production of *The Tempest* at the Theatre Royal in Copenhagen, no less than seventeen short pieces which, together with the Prelude, form one of his masterpieces. It is scored for so large an orchestra that hardly any theatre can use it to-day, but it remains a striking instance of music for drama.

The primary difficulty of this collaboration is that the time sense in music is fundamentally different from that of the spoken word. Music has a habit of expanding the very details that are inessential in a given dramatic situation. Suppose an actor has the line: "See, twilight approaches; it is time to begin . . ." The action is quickening on the stage but the music will be caught and held by the word "twilight" and the composer will be straining at the dramatic leash to let his music unfold its deepening mystery. The actors, meanwhile, chafe at the unwelcome delay. The producer can only attempt reconciliation at the musician's expense. The musician knows perfectly well that if the producer gives way to him the combined result will not succeed, but to have his music cut for dramatic ends is bound to damp his enthusiasm for the alliance between the two arts. For him opera, and opera only, provides the complete solution.

But to say this is not enough. Music is needed in the "straight" theatre, and we must try to see how it can find a

satisfactory place in the dramatic scene. Can we then define the best and most economical ways of using music in the theatre?

We shall have to consider hearth and home as part of the theatre, since broadcasting has provided countless people—the geographically isolated, the physically and financially handicapped—with their theatrical lifeline. It is in sound broadcasting, as distinct from television, that music has played a vital part. The B.B.C. has commissioned composers to write special music for its dramatic productions; these scores have often been welcomed by discriminating listeners, though some have found the music a distraction. Reactions are equally conflicting towards the B.B.C.'s "snatch and grab" raids on symphonic music. As a musician I have a strong objection to the use of snippets of a complete work. Yet this technique can be effective, as witness those few bars from the Scherzo of Borodin's B Minor Symphony that give an intimation of Joyce Grenfell on the air. How evocative a few bars from Sibelius's Sixth Symphony once sounded in conjunction with Scott in the Antarctic (before the film with Vaughan Williams's music). On the other hand, I have a sharp distaste for the use of a theme from Dvorak's Fourth Symphony to herald the approach of *Nicholas Nickleby*. How much better was Noel Coward's treatment of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto in the film *Brief Encounter*, where the audience was given an impression of music playing continuously, even when unheard, while the drama unfolded. Here the time sense of music and the different time sense of drama were never in conflict. Nor were we conscious of a portion of the symphonic anatomy being detached from the main body and grafted on to a different species of art.

To use music in the living theatre is to-day increasingly difficult. Higher minimum rates for orchestral players, performing and mechanical rights,

constitute additional expenses that may well turn box office figures from black to red. Where do we begin to look for order in the present chaos? The only answer is to attempt a very little, and to do it as well as possible. Aldous Huxley, in his essay *Music at Night*, writes the following sentences which have far-reaching implications—

"When the inexpressible had to be expressed, Shakespeare laid down his pen and called for music. And if the music should also fail? Well, there was always silence to fall back on."

Is it too much to ask of present-day audiences that they should begin to be aware of silence as a *dramatic effect*? If the answer is "yes," then what about music as an expression of those rare moments in the theatre which lie beyond speech? During half a lifetime of theatregoing, three memories exemplify the truth of Huxley's hypothesis. A production of *Hamlet* with Sir Godfrey Tearle; incidental music by (I think) Norman O'Neill. It consisted mainly of fanfares for about three trumpets with percussion. These fanfares gave all the primary colours of the musical spectrum, both light and dark. They were thematically related and sounded the changes of the drama briefly, clearly and with magnificent effect. For *The Constant Nymph* Eugene Goossens wrote a song for Tessa and Lewis which crystallised the whole essential drift of the play. It touched an excellent production with a quality of greatness. The use of the Somerset folk song *Searching for Lambs in Autumn* *Crocus* (arranged by Eugene Goossens) must have moved many people to whom folk song means little or nothing: it expressed the inexpressible, just as music did so often for Shakespeare.

* * *

Speaking, then, as a theatregoer who is incidentally concerned with music, I would like to feel that producers and actors were more aware both of the power of music and of the inherent difficulties of combining music with drama. Is it possible to have less music

in the theatre and for it to be used only for those moments where words falter and fail? Shakespeare's stage directions set a pattern that has never been surpassed. Can we substitute fanfares of all kinds for "signature tunes" before the curtain rises? Also, in the second Elizabethan age, may we be spared an overdose of self-conscious "period" music, skilfully "realised" by this or that expert? Instead, let composers be given modest commissions to write one or two songs, or short *entr'actes* for small instrumental forces. Gramophone records, too, can be used with imagination and caution, and not amplified *ad lib* into the auditorium to encourage *bonhomie* during the interval. (As a result of this practice, bewildered and a trifle deafened, we approach the next scene with our faculties blunted instead of sharpened.) If producers can only tell composers exactly what they want, however small the need, then the partnership of music and drama should be rich and enduring. Let us create music for our needs and use it sparingly. And for the play where music has no particular *raison d'être*, the moment has now come to complete Aldous Huxley's sentence—

"For always, always and everywhere, the rest is silence."



ELIZABETHAN FLUTE PLAYER. One of the many illustrations, by Paul Sharp, from Freda Dinn's "Music" (Frederick Warne, 5s.), a pocket-size guide in the "Observer" series. The book includes sections on Sound, Musical Instruments, Concert Programme terms and Composers.

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH DRAMATISTS

by Clifford Bax

3. Noel Coward

HERE is our light-weight champion. Like Goldoni, he can devise a comedy or an operetta out of almost nothing, nor should we forget his brilliant, ironical one-man revues. He made it all look so easy, and scored such a fairy tale success in the later nineteen-twenties that dozens of young men and women strove to emulate him. Why did few of their efforts get further than the typist's office? Some of them could improvise quick-firing dialogue, could people their comedies with impatient young persons, could again portray likeable feckless mothers or stumping dowagers. What was lacking in this school of Coward? His remarkable fecundity in imagining comic (but arresting) situations.

We should notice first his instinct for a telling title: for example, *Hay Fever*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Easy Virtue* and *Fallen Angels*. He could never have named a play *As You Like It*, a completely unindicative title. Indeed, Burbage in these days would have rejected it outright. Now everybody recalls the two young "Fallen Angels," who awaiting their French ex-lover, begin a long course of steady drinking. Alcoholic scenes are so usual that they can become tiresome, but we have a pleasant confidence that this author hates the stereotyped and suffers much from all that is tedious.

In *Blithe Spirit*, Coward's dazzling technique is at its finest. We may feel,



NOEL COWARD

with the late Mr. Gladstone, that psychical research is the most important study for man since he emerged from the cave and ceased to gnaw bones, but who could have expected much amusement from a séance during which a man's first wife manifests? No one, except Coward or Goldoni, would have contrived that she should be visible only to her widower, or have given him lines which are addressed to the ghost but (here is the comedy) seem to be offensively pointed to his present wife. Again, no aspirant in the school of Coward is likely to have conceived that the first wife, trying to collect her husband into the other world, should so damage his motor car that it is not he but the second wife who embarrasses the first wife by joining her as a new-comer ghost? Coward, unlike Aldous Huxley in *The World of Light*, seems to know something of these attempts to bridge the two states of existence. He even resisted the temptation of making his medium a figure of fun, although I am told this did not apply to the film version.

His fame is so great that it might be

termed world-wide if we did not suspect that there are tribes in Indo-China and probably a few Tibetan monks to whom his work is not known; but for us his success has been splendidly merited. Consider, to begin with, his courage in presenting *To-night at Eight-thirty* when for at least thirty years one-act plays had been regarded by managers as intractable white elephants. Or again, that tragic and triumphant theatre-stroke in *Cavalcade* when the lovers on a liner talk in the moonlight, the young wife having thrown her wrap across a lifebelt, and then as she picks it up, casually showing us the fatal inscription "S.S. Titanic." There can be few such breath-taking moments in the long history of play-writing. If *Cavalcade* has sometimes been undervalued by journalists the reason probably is that many of those who scorned the piece were out of sympathy with the author's right-wing instinct, his patriotism, his respect for our old institutions. Wells and Shaw had been twisting the minds of our "intellectuals" for a number of decades.

Coward perceived very early, as Irish playwrights do, the stage value of a quarrel. There cannot have been so many quarrels in the work of any other writer, whether between husbands and wives, or lovers, or envious matrons. Another hall-mark is his liking for a final or intermediate "curtain" in which somebody smashes up the furniture. It is said that everybody occasionally longs to smash something, but fortunately not all of us find this true. (I do remember a jealous wife hurling a glass into the fire because her husband's book seemed to be obliquely praising another woman; and also a charming young woman who sent her telephone crashing to the floor because somebody had waked her up too soon. Otherwise people of my acquaintance seem to be reasonably self-controlled.) This smithereen effect is particularly well-used in the last act of *Private Lives*.

Much has been chattered about Coward's wit, but wit is caused by

verbal surprise and we shall seldom find in his work so good an example as:-

KELD: You, being a woman yourself, are much too down on your sex; I regard you all impartially with the eye of an observer.

SHEILA: Yes, like standing outside Buckingham Palace and trying to make an inventory of the furniture.

Coward's alternative is an amusing inconsequentiality. It is not less entertaining and it is truer to human personalities. In his earlier plays he carried it too far, overworking the words "or something," as who should say "the Battle of Waterloo or something," "It's near the Albert Hall or something," or "You're going to say that you've committed bigamy or something." The purpose is to suggest a comic vagueness of mind, but the trick became tiresome.

The worst that can be said of Coward's inexhaustible talent (or genius) is that the characters of his devising are nearly all family relations, and that he has not projected any personality who is new to the theatre and yet convincing; such figures as Old English (Galsworthy), Shotover (Shaw) and The Indifferent Shepherd (Ustinov). Moreover, although his many characters are credible and are obviously in search of actors and actresses, they have not the subcutaneous subtlety of Freddie and Caroline in E. M. Delafield's *To See Ourselves*.

In his modest introduction to *Play Parade* (Volume Three) Coward says that if a play fails we may believe that it is usually the fault of the piece itself. Professional critics appear to be in unanimous agreement, but a fine play can be wrecked by bad casting, just as a mediocre piece may run for years if it is brilliantly acted. Even Noel Coward has had failures—for instance, *Home Chat* and *Sirocco*. He tells us that the gallery booed *Home Chat*, but why? The situation is comic enough. There has been a railway accident in France. Newspaper men discover that a wife of a best-selling but meretricious novelist

has perforce been sharing a wagon-lit with a male friend whom she has known since childhood. The unguilty pair amuse themselves by playing up to the prurient assumptions of their middle-aged relatives. The gallery must have booed for one of two reasons, or for both: they may have thought foolishly that it was time for the author to "learn a lesson," or they may have had a sudden attack of that puritanical malaria which is liable to break out at any time in London.

When we examine Coward's more serious plays we shall find that the newspapers, anticipating flippancy, under-valued them. There are hints of tragic perception in his delineation of the exotic Larita (*Easy Virtue*) and throughout *Sirocco*—although for once in a way here is a work that moves too slowly. Again, in *Post Mortem* Coward grappled with a theme which may be impracticable in the theatre. A young soldier, killed in the first German War, returns, as a ghost, after twelve years. He thinks that he has only just been killed. In order to make his visits to his mother and old comrades credible to an audience that shudders at the thought of a return from death, the author adroitly makes each person suppose that the visit is a dream: but it would be exceedingly difficult for an actor to move about corporeally for several scenes and still to create the sensation that he has come from the Other World. We shall find in this neglected work some memorable passages. Here are three:—

JOHN (the Ghost): I know about war—a bitter and cruel knowledge, horror upon horror, stretched far beyond breaking point, the few moments of gallant beauty there are not enough measured against the hideous ages of suffering!

PERRY (an old war comrade): One little ego in the Universe, mine, humiliated and shamed into dust by being alive.

JOHN: . . . something intangible and desolately beautiful because it is based upon the deepest tragedy of all, disillusion beyond hope. Strangely enough your whole religion is founded on that same tragedy, though in comparison with

the war, the crucifixion becomes microscopic in proportion. Christ was one man, the war was millions.

These lines were not scribbled by a cocktail-drinking young man. The newspapers and the public should encourage Coward to use his sense of tragedy. He will take an enviable position in the record of our theatre. Pinero, Somerset Maugham and St. John Ervine were strong play-builders, nor did they lack humour; but they did lack Coward's high spirits.

People already refer to *The Vortex* (1924) as a period piece, and this is likely to be said of all his work. The point to keep in mind is that a play either becomes a period piece or vanishes into limbo. Goldoni charmingly presents Venetian life in the eighteenth century, but he will easily outlast those later playwrights who based most of their work on social problems of this or that decade. Unfortunately, Coward tried in *Quadrille* to write better English. He achieved only second-rate Pinero.

The Theatre Now

HAROLD HOBSON

In this new book, the dramatic critic of the *Sunday Times* traces to what extent the contemporary theatre reflects—and influences—the spirit of our day. He discusses in detail the work of our chief living dramatists, especially Fry and Eliot.

15s. net

LONGMANS

STRATFORD 1953: First Instalment

by W. Bushill-Matthews

DENIS CAREY and Glen Byam Shaw, producing the first two plays of this season, interpret *The Merchant of Venice* and *Richard III* in a forthright way without any of the freakish originality so apparent in some recent revivals at Stratford-upon-Avon.

satisfying performance, characterised with infinite care and enhanced by the introduction of guttural intonations into his resonant voice.

Peggy Ashcroft successfully presents Portia as an heiress enduring the boredom of being wooed by unwanted suitors until she betrays with artful girlishness that Bassanio is her choice as a husband. In the trial scene she wears masculine attire with ease and makes a good advocate, not only for Antonio but also later for herself as the lover in disguise. The comedy scenes are never forced and the clowning of Donald Pleasance as Launcelot Gobbo has a refreshing *naïveté*.

The gilded fretwork pillars of the semi-permanent setting designed by Hutchinson Scott are delightful to look at and are effectively manipulated to indicate the change of scene, although the prominent central position of Shylock's house creates doubt as to when the action is at Belmont and when at Venice. The production allows

full scope for the appreciation of Shakespeare's verse.

Villainy is also the keynote of *Richard III*, sounded ominously by Marius Goring in the Prologue. He has an ingratiating way with his plotting and scheming and, with a shortened left leg instead of a hunch upon his back, his appearance is not so abhorrent as it might be, despite a somewhat clownish



PEGGY ASHCROFT as Portia.

Michael Redgrave's Shylock is a rich Jew not content with the traditional gabardine but more elegantly dressed than usual. His affection for money is clearly much greater than for his daughter; he is the crafty villain thirsting for revenge, with little thought for anything but his own wealth and his hatred of the Gentiles. On these lines Mr. Redgrave gives a most

make-up. This Richard is a courtier weaving his murderous plots under the cloak of plausibility. His personal vanity is carefully underlined and evidenced particularly by the wearing of many

costumes designed by Motley give pageantry to the closing scenes of the Wars of the Roses. The four women provide a chorus of verbal lamentations to emphasise the sorrows of humanity



MICHAEL REDGRAVE as Shylock.

gaily coloured clothes, once the throne has been secured.

Ample use is made of the apron stage, which is made to harmonise architecturally with the many arches behind the proscenium opening, whilst the

afflicted by the ruthlessness of warfare and wickedness in high places.

One is particularly glad to welcome a live orchestra back into its own pit, and so to be able to appreciate to the full Leslie Bridgwater's incidental music.

The Nonesuch Shakespeare

Her Majesty THE QUEEN has graciously accepted the dedication of the new 'Coronation' Nonesuch Shakespeare. It has been designed by Sir Francis Meynell whose aim has been to give a comely and convenient form to the most complete and exact text of Shakespeare. The Nonesuch text was established 20 years ago in a limited edition at £26.5.0 for seven volumes. All the copies were quickly sold. This newly designed edition is in four volumes, and the price is the remarkably low one of 7 guineas. It can be seen now at your Bookseller. Prospectus from your Bookseller or from The Nonesuch Press 66 Chandos Place WC2.

Theatre Bookshelf

Eighteenth Century Drama

"*An Introduction to Eighteenth Century Drama*," by Frederick S. Boas. O.U.P. 25s.

This is an invaluable book. Dr. Boas has done a great deal more than his title leads us to expect. We are given much more than an introduction—our appetites are positively whetted. I am quite sure that everyone who reads this book will at once go to such a contemporary collection as Mrs. Inchbald's *British Theatre* with a definite feeling of guilt that it has sat so long untouched, and then will find himself wanting to see some of the plays performed. Not many, apart from what might be called the hardy annuals, would stand up to revival, but that does not lessen their fascination to read; and Dr. Boas reveals a keen perception of those plays which might "play" in the theatre of to-day.

But outside the tough demands and high risks of the modern commercial theatre, here, I humbly suggest, is a wonderful field for the teachers in dramatic schools and academies. Teach a young actor to play these plays with style, clarity and authority and you are more than halfway to teaching him to play anything. You are probably also more than halfway to being a genius, for their playing presents perhaps the most formidable difficulties of technique that can face an actor.

It is fascinating to read Mrs. Inchbald's comments on the authors and their plays alongside those of Dr. Boas. Of Farquhar the latter says, charmingly, that "he brought to comedy a fresh spirit of geniality," and speaks of the first night of *The Beaux' Stratagem* on March 8, 1707, as the "start of a triumphant stage career during the following centuries." The upright Mrs. Inchbald declares it to be "an honour to the morality of the present age that this entertaining comedy is seldom performed." Where the Doctor finds

"a fresh spirit of geniality" she finds "unrestrained contempt of principle." Again, of Garrick and Colman's *The Clandestine Marriage* the lady states that "it is pleasanter to read than to see" while Dr. Boas holds—I think rightly—that the theatrical effectiveness of the last act of the play can be fully realised only when it is seen on the stage.

One of the most remarkable things about the book is the way in which the author leads one, surely and clearly, through the maze of plot which is characteristic of so many plays of the period. He has an uncanny gift for clarification. So much so that even with those plays with which one thought one was familiar a new light breaks through. Rather as though one suddenly took a picture from a dingy corner of the stairs and re-hung it in a fine light in the drawing room—and found oneself wondering why one had never noticed before how much pleasure it could give.

The study of eighteenth-century drama holds, as Dr. Boas says in his preface, far more than a purely theatrical interest. It does indeed "throw light on the eighteenth-century attitude towards such vexed questions as duelling, divorce, gambling, both public and private, the game laws, recruiting for the army and the naval press-gang." The mirror is up to eighteenth-century nature.

Starting with Rowe and Farquhar we progress via (among others) Steele, Cibber, Mrs. Centlivre, Addison, Gay, Fielding, Lillo, Bickerstaffe, Garrick and Colman the elder to the grand finale of Goldsmith and Sheridan. And an enthralling progress it is: one to be savoured. This is no book to take from the library, read, and return. It is, like Granville-Barker's *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, an essential tenant of one's own bookshelf; one to place on the bedside table of a respected guest.

JOHN CLEMENTS

Myth and Modernity

"*The Fortunes of Faust.*" E. M. Butler. C.U.P. 30s.

"*The Plays of Georg Buchner.*" Trans. with an introduction by Geoffrey Dunlop. Vision. 15s.

Miss Butler has now completed the last volume of a monumental trilogy. Scholarship and critical acumen are illuminated by an easy style and the book will remain indispensable for anyone who wishes to trace the fortunes of a famous myth. Miss Butler sets the Faust and Don Juan legends in contrast, showing how the man who sets out to conquer love has inspired a great deal more literary and musical rubbish than the man who sets out to conquer knowledge. In a sense, no subsequent treatment of Faust is more impressive than the *Ur-Faust*, where all the possibilities of the theme, including the salvation of the hero's soul through the suffering of his body, are already implicit. Miss Butler doubts, with good reason, whether even a work so massive and imaginative as Thomas Mann's novel will have the same effect on a writer three hundred years from now as the sixteenth century *Ur-Faust* had on him. She shows the Faustian idea as tragic and religious in the mind of Marlowe, and humanised and rationalised in the mind of Goethe. For all its appeal to the Romantics, reaching the English through Byron's *Manfred*, it was already losing its transcendence; a Euripidean agnosticism was applying the measurements of reason, and disguising them in the magic of poetry. There could be no salvation, Miss Butler reminds us, where no damnation loomed, and "symbolism was called in to mediate between a tragic myth and a noble humane and enlightened ethic." This began with Lessing and continued through Goethe and beyond. If the first—and finest—word was with Marlowe, the last is with Paul Valéry, whose *Mon Faust* appeared just as the second World War was ending. The Faustian desire for unlimited discovery was

celebrating its apotheosis in the atomic age, and imminent chaos was making Mephistopheles more and more irrelevant. It would be impertinent to criticise Miss Butler's book; like all great works of disinterested scholarship it reaches far beyond its terms of reference.

We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Mr. Geoffrey Dunlop for translating so well and introducing to us so clearly the plays of Georg Buchner (1813-37). In his short life Buchner anticipated the naturalist reactions of later schools, but there is a hidden poetry in *Leonce and Lena* and a severe style in *Danton's Death* which give to these, and other of his works, the stuff of permanence. Alban Berg, composing his opera from *Wozzeck* in 1925, found no difficulty in collaborating with a librettist who had been dead for nearly a hundred years. Buchner was the first of the moderns; he wrote as if he were a contemporary of Pirandello and Sartre.

ROBERT SPEAIGHT

Romans at the Back of it

"*The Nature of Roman Comedy.*" A Study in Popular Entertainment, by George E. Duckworth. Cumberlege 48s.

"*The Pattern of Tragi-Comedy in Beaumont and Fletcher.*" by Eugene M. Waith. O.U.P. 25s.

These two books exemplify the American tradition of exacting scholarship. Professor Duckworth's learned examination spans twenty-four centuries, for it was the Greek comic tradition that handed on to Plautus and Terence the "objects of universal laughter"; and on they go, right down through Shakespeare and Dickens to Wodehouse. What is the inimitable Jeeves but a descendant of the "intriguing slave"? These Romans had their fun in their hearty bourgeois way, besides building their walls and drains and taking their cities and burning them, and, though the serious student will find every aspect of Roman comedy, from staging to prosody, presented in fullest detail, its basic entertainment value is never obscured in a

mist of scholarship. Plautus emerges as a Roman Christopher Fry, with irrepressible verbal exuberance, capable of such coinages as "exclusissimus" to describe a locked-out husband, or of such satirical nonsense as "Why don't I go and hang myself—for a while, at least, until I feel better?" Terence is clearly contrasted as the more elegant and ironical, given to graceful aphorism. One can sum up with his own eternal verity, "Nothing is said now that has not been said before."

Mr. Waith's analysis of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragi-comedy, treating it not as a sort of effete offspring of the great Elizabethans, but as a special genre in its own right, is extremely valuable. He makes subtle distinctions and definitions, but the chief interest lies in tracing the tradition to the art of declamation, particularly as practised in schools in the study of Seneca's *Controversiae*, in which the pupil "temporarily assumed a role" and talked himself into, round and out of, some hypothetical situation. Thus the alleged superficiality, sensationalism, and sophistication are explained, and in dramatising an educational exercise and formal art, the playwrights have achieved a "triumph of technique . . . and dramatic formalism . . ."; indeed, "the basic design of all drama." And once again the Romans are at the back of it all.

MARJORIE THOMPSON

Ibsen to Eliot

"*Ibsen's Dramatic Method*," by John Northam. Faber. 21s.

"*Preface to Ibsen's 'Hedda Gabler'*," by Eva Le Gallienne. Faber. 21s.

"*Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*," by Raymond Williams. Chatto. 18s.

Interest in Ibsen seems to be never-ending; here are three books, two of which are concerned with him entirely while the third starts with him and devotes rather more than one-fifth of its pages to his work.

Dr. Northam has made a careful study of all Ibsen's scenic descriptions, his indications for his characters'

colouring, costume and make-up, his stage directions and lighting effects, and stresses the importance which Ibsen certainly attached to visual suggestion. He takes us in detail through the prose plays, from *A Doll's House* to *When We Dead Awaken*, and any future producer of Ibsen will be well advised to study his findings carefully. At times perhaps he reads more significance into stage-settings than can be wholly justified: Rebecca, in *Rosmersholm*, "is first seen sitting close to the flowers, so that our eyes take them both in together. Consequently we tend to associate with her the idea of natural vigour." Would even ten per cent. of an audience make such an association? And might not flowers equally suggest fragility? Some of Dr. Northam's—and Ibsen's—suggestions about lighting, particularly of the inner stage, can hardly be of use in this country, where theatres likely to perform Ibsen are without adequate stage depth. The attic in *The Wild Duck* usually looks like a small alcove behind sliding panels, in which it is impossible to believe that old Ekdal could enjoy shooting; Ibsen evidently intended a deep dim vista. And for satisfactory staging of *When We Dead Awaken* the resources of Drury Lane would hardly be too many.

Miss Eva Le Gallienne devotes herself to a single play, *Hedda Gabler*, and her preface, which her publishers justly compare with Granville Barker's *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, should be of the utmost value for any future production. Every character in the play is studied from within, each scene visualised, its implications expounded, its tempo indicated. So far as it is possible to produce a play within the covers of a book, here is a brilliant production. To this Miss Le Gallienne has added her own vivid translation of the play, which reads admirably and would doubtless play magnificently.

Mr. Raymond Williams is concerned with drama and but little with the theatre. His book, which covers the

hundred years' span from 1850 to the present time, is not, as one might expect, a survey of that drama which, in the latter part of the period, became increasingly realistic, but is an anxious search among certain of its principal dramatists for indications of a revolt against naturalism, which is, for Mr. Williams, the accursed thing. Ibsen gets past because the plays even of his middle period sometimes contain an admixture of symbolism; but the works which really interest Mr. Williams are the unactable or the rarely acted, *Brand*, *Emperor and Galilean*, *When We Dead Awaken*. Strindberg too had his naturalistic period, that of *The Father*, *Lady Julie*, *Creditors*; he is to be preferred in his less easily comprehensible works such as *The Road to Damascus* trilogy, *The Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*. Mr. Williams has hopes of Chekhov; does not Treplef in *The Seagull* inveigh against the naturalistic play, and is not the seagull itself symbolic? But in the end he has regretfully to leave Chekhov "in the camp of decadent naturalism."

With Shaw there is no difficulty. By a few adroitly chosen quotations Mr. Williams easily convicts him of "inflated sentimentality" and shows him to be just what he imagined he was not, the purveyor of romantic emotion. Synge is "the most remarkable English-speaking prose dramatist of the century," but his work "if not in itself major drama," is "an important rediscovery of major dramatic possibilities." That's something.

Other dramatists are briefly looked over, but Mr. Williams is not really happy until he reaches Yeats, to whom he is able to award full marks. Yeats's fine achievements in play writing receive due appreciation, and he is praised, with T. S. Eliot, because in opposing the naturalist tradition they made experiment possible. Yet Yeats founded no school of verse-drama; a glance down the long list of Abbey Theatre playwrights shows them to be prose dramatists with barely an exception. (Yeats's contemporaries, some of

whose plays reached the stage, Arthur Symonds, Sturge Moore, Laurence Binyon, Gordon Bottomley, are not mentioned.) And of the younger poets who, encouraged by Mr. Eliot's success, have written plays, Mr. Williams does not seem to think much. But he feels—or at any rate hopes—that judicious criticism may do the trick; and perhaps his own book may start the ball rolling and usher in a second Elizabethan age of poetic drama. One can applaud his intention, while feeling that we shall probably continue to get the drama we deserve.

A few errors have crept in. "It is one of the ironies of dramatic history," writes Mr. Williams, "... that in the first programme of the *Independent Theatre* should be plays both by Shaw and by W. B. Yeats." Here are three mistakes: the *Independent Theatre* produced no play by Yeats; its first production was of Ibsen's *Ghosts*; several others followed before Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* was given, and that, when it came, filled the programme alone. And though Shaw is known to have had his pet theories about typography, no play called *The Admirable Baskerville* can be found in his collected works.

ALLAN WADE

Shakespeare All Alive

"*King Lear*." Ed. Kenneth Muir. Arden Shakespeare. Methuen. 18s.

"*The Little World of Man*," by J. B. Bamborough. Longmans. 20s.

"*The Enjoyment of Shakespeare*," by F. E. Halliday. Duckworth. 7s. 6d. net.

"*Shakespearean Stage Production: Then and Now*," by Cécile de Banke. McGraw-Hill. New York \$6.

This third volume of the revised Arden Shakespeare is an eighth issue of *King Lear*, and it is significant of the times we live in that seven of these editions have appeared since the outbreak of the First World War.

Professor Muir's introduction and notes bear witness to the growing preoccupation of scholars with the play's textual, dramatic and critical

problems; while in the theatre this tragedy, which used to be considered "unactable," has in our time elicited outstanding performances from more leading actors than ever before within one generation. Modern textual studies have demonstrated beyond question that the Folio gives us the basic text, and Professor Muir is consequently more strict in his rejection of many hitherto accepted quarto readings than was his predecessor. Those who have not yet seen these new Arden volumes will be glad to know that the admirable lay-out of the original has been retained, with text, variants and notes complete on each page.

In his anatomy of Man the Microcosm, the "little modell of the sensible world," Mr. Bamforth provides the student of literature and in particular of Shakespeare's plays, with a knowledge of Renaissance psychological theory which will enable him to refer characterisation and behaviour not to modern thought but to the ideas generally current at the time. In the last thirty years studies of this kind have contributed much to a better understanding of the intellectual climate of the age, and of that poetic universe, in which all the parts were related to each other, which lay behind Shakespeare's amazing comprehension of human nature and human experience. Mr. Bamforth's presentation of this "neat, integrated and orderly account of human existence" is clearly handled and aptly illustrated. There is an excellent brief bibliography.

It is time that somebody protested about blurbs which do authors no service by blurbling of "the old-fashioned uninspired teaching of Shakespeare in schools" in order to recommend "criticism," written for teen-agers and their juniors. In those "old-fashioned" days this dilution of literary studies was frowned upon, and we were left to take the direct impact of the texts themselves, and then ask our questions and explore the plays to the best of our capacities, helped on by the stimulus

of unobtrusively guided discussion. I do not believe that Mr. Halliday's own pre-Certificate pupils either needed or were given a book "on" Shakespeare, and I should hate to think that teachers in general encourage the reading of books "on" the plays and poems that are studied at this stage of school-life. And for the forms above this level his book is too elementary.

Cécile de Banke is an Englishwoman who began a theatrical career under Reinhardt and is at present Associate Professor of Speech at Wellesley College. Her book on Shakespearean production is the fruit of years of practical experience in all kinds of theatre work, and of the right kind of knowledge and enthusiasm. For students or societies who are new to the producing of Elizabethan plays in the Elizabethan manner it is a treasure of a book. It gives a most useful and comprehensive survey of stage conditions in Shakespeare's theatre, and then deals with the practical problems of staging a reconstruction of a Shakespearean performance. It is expensive for English readers, but caters in precise detail for all demands: acting, costumes and their cut, colours and accessories; furniture, props, lighting, sound effects; dance steps and tunes, musical instruments and their possible equivalents, correct music and where to find it; hangings, floor coverings—all these and many other questions such as the location of the different kinds of scenes are satisfactorily yet briefly dealt with.

M. ST. CLARE BYRNE

"The Stratford Festival," by T. C. Kemp and J. C. Trewin. Cornish. 25s.
"Shakespeare Survey 6," C.U.P. 18s.

The history of Stratford-on-Avon's Festival is straightforwardly told by two critics who value this typically English enterprise. We share the long years of scepticism and ridicule and follow the persistent promoters through many ups and downs to their present great success. Every Festival is recorded, with casts and some kindly critical

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passage, which typifies the Survey's
object, to "relate study to stage," and
the object admirably fulfilled.

E. M. B.

Anouilh

"Jean Anouilh," by Edward Owen
Marsh. W. H. Allen. 16s.

This book will undoubtedly form
part of the reference library of any
discerning amateur of the theatre. It
provides a useful outline of the author's
career, with the plots of the plays listed
in chronological order, somewhat in the
manner of the music lover's guide to
the opera. Anouilh's peculiar splashing
personality is discussed in the context
of the plays themselves, whether *Ros*
or *Noir*, and anyone familiar only with
the London productions is thus given
an opportunity of assessing their value
in relation to the rest of his dramatic
output.

To describe the book for what it is
therefore, is very much easier than to
cavil at it for what it is not. Any
biographer must either admire or
deplore the subject of his study, since
impartiality makes for a luke-warm
approach, but unfortunately for a
serious student of the drama Mr.
Marsh's admiration has prevented him
from making an unbiased judgment
of Anouilh's position in the con-
temporary French theatre. The sub-
title of the book itself, "Poet of *Pierrot*
and *Pantaloon*," is misleading, in that
the reader might well believe he is
about to be introduced to a spiritual
descendant of Maeterlinck, and the
purist will complain that nowhere has
Mr. Marsh traced Anouilh's develop-
ment as a craftsman, overcoming the
basic flaws in construction of the earlier

plays by the discovery that the perfect formula for his expression is a play of not more than ninety minutes' duration. The two best pieces of work are undoubtedly *Antigone* and *Ardèle*, both of which, according to the author's instructions, should be acted without intervals, and in parenthesis, it might be mentioned that two of Christopher Fry's best plays, *A Phoenix Too Frequent* and *A Sleep of Prisoners*, are also about the same length.

KITTY BLACK

Furniture and Dress

"Victorian Furniture," by F. Gordon Roe. *Phoenix*. 21s.

"Dress in Mediaeval France," by Joan Evans. *O.U.P.* 35s.

Mr. Roe has written an authoritative and absorbing book. "Time was when the term Victorian furniture carried with it a savour of contempt or condescension," he says; and goes on to show how some of these spurned pieces are now "on the waiting list for promotion to the status of genuine antiques".

He divides his period into Early, Mid and Late Victorian, and discusses the styles and development of furniture in the house—chairs, tables, beds and chests—as well as more elaborate, specialised and "romantic" articles. These include mirrors, cabinets, work-tables, papier maché work of various kinds, "Chippendale-Gothic" and the "Rustic" furniture which go with a taste for artificial ruins, grottoes and the like. Mr. Roe's overall picture of the period shows that, amid the undoubted eccentricities, over-elaboration and occasional lack of taste, a real creative spirit did exist. We are made aware of the historical trends and the social background which are always reflected in the designs of objects for daily use, and of the impetus supplied by the Great Exhibition.

Many of the contemporary photographs and prints reproduced have a wonderfully full period flavour. The book will be enjoyed by the general reader, and will also be of great value

to the specialist in theatrical décor.

Dr. Evans's detailed account of the development of French costume from the 11th century to the Renaissance is not written specially for the theatrical designer, but is a work of scholarship in which the designer will find both inspiration and illumination. Dr. Evans shows dress as "a faithful mirror of its times: it recognised distinction of class and vocation as being at least as important as the distinction between the sexes". The reader will find the answers to such questions as when various fabrics were first used, the number of gowns or robes owned by persons of quality, the significance of fashion in colours, the wearing of mourning and the differences between ceremonial and ordinary dress, to quote a few examples. Dr. Evans deals with Bourgeois dress as well as court fashion with interesting comments on head-dresses and shoes, the use of chain-mail and plate armour and clerical dress during the period.

The book is carefully documented from contemporary writings, inventories, court and private accounts, books of etiquette and so forth. It is very well produced and contains a valuable bibliography and an index. The 84 illustrations from contemporary paintings, sculptures and tapestries are most beautiful and the author's descriptive notes on the garments shown clarify and enrich the reader's appreciation.

"World Costumes," by Angela Bradshaw. *A. and C. Black*. 40s.

This is a beautifully produced book consisting almost entirely of drawings in which decorative details are combined with most graceful draughtsmanship. Miss Bradshaw has written a brief introduction in which she explains that the purpose of her book is to provide a general work of reference in the field of National costume and to assist the artist and designer in search of new ideas. This she has fulfilled admirably. She gives brief comments on the traditional costume of many countries and adds notes to each page of drawings. There are sixteen colour

plates also and these with their emphasis on surface texture and pattern should prove inspiring to those who are interested in embroidery.

The book concludes with a very brief outline of Ancient Costume and the development of English Costume from the Norman period until 1900.

NORAH LAMBOURNE

On the Staging of Plays

"*The Art and Science of Stage Management*," by Peter Goffin. Garnet Miller. 12s. 6d.

This book took me by surprise. It is not a book on how to make a wind machine, in fact it is not a book on Stage Management.

Admittedly there is a chapter headed "Workshop and Machine" which gallops gaily from Aristotle to O'Casey, has some interesting information about stage machinery in fifteenth-century Florence, and takes in theatre architecture on the way; but the book as a whole is really a treatise on decor and production, and its title is therefore

somewhat misleading.

In this earnest and erudite work Mr. Goffin quotes Shaw, Havelock Ellis and Kurt Koffka and discusses, amongst other things, the Elements of Theatre, the art and theories of Gordon Craig and the work of Harley Granville-Barker. He cleverly relieves these discussions with some engaging little anecdotes. Two of these I found particularly amusing; an account of Charles Reade's ideas for "pepping up" *Macbeth* in 1874 and Isadora Duncan's description of Craig's lunatic Egyptian Temple setting for, believe it or not, a production of *Rosmersholm* in 1906 with Eleonora Duse as Rebecca West. The book finishes with a very interesting chapter on the problems of staging O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* at the Westminster Theatre in 1937.

This is a serious-minded work for the serious-minded student of the theatre, but it is not, I repeat, about stage management.

ADRIAN STANLEY

Shakespeare Survey 6

EDITED BY ALLARDYCE NICOLL

Shakespeare Survey, now in its sixth year, has established itself as the international forum where scholars, critics, students of the drama, and men and women of the theatre can exchange ideas and experience in the interests of a better understanding and a greater enjoyment of Shakespeare's plays. This present volume, for instance, discusses the History plays in the light of recent productions and new appreciation of Shakespeare's purpose in writing them. There are also articles on *Othello*, *Antony*, and *Timon*, and on Shakespeare in China, as well as critical reviews of books and of productions at Stratford and London. A descriptive leaflet on the earlier volumes is available.

18s. net

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

This Amateur Business

"The Business Side of the Amateur Theatre," by Alan Nelson-Smith. Macdonald and Evans. 8s. 6d.

During the last thirty-five years the amateur theatre has been well served by the publication of books on both the artistic and technical sides of their art. Here at last is a treatise on the business side of the amateur theatre. Such a book is badly needed, for most of us are terribly unbusinesslike.

Mr. Nelson-Smith appropriately starts with a concise model Constitution designed to cover every contingency, and its form might well be adopted by many established organisations. Chapters on the licensing of plays and the relationship between society and author clear up a lot of loose thinking on these points, and there is also a detailed exposition of the law in relation to Entertainments Tax, quoting the relevant Sections of the Finance Acts concerned. An excellent "skeleton" budget with explanatory notes is included and with this before him the Business Manager should find his duties enormously simplified. Indeed, the amateur theatre would benefit greatly if all its officers could read the illuminating chapters on their various duties and responsibilities.

The audience has not been overlooked. Many of us spend much time and thought on what goes on behind the "tabs" but give little attention to one of the prime factors of a successful show—the audience. Societies would be well advised to ensure that their audiences receive the consideration suggested here. The book concludes with a chapter on Festivals and an appendix on Fire Precautions in small halls.

This work makes a valuable contribution to the amateur theatre movement and it would be a grave omission if this excellent book were not included in the library of every play-producing company.

GORDON M. DOUGLAS

Three-Act Plays

"Beggars My Neighbour," by Arnold Ridley. Evans. 5s.

"We Must Kill Toni," by Ian Stuart Black. Evans. 5s.

"The Same Sky," by Yvonne Mitchell. Evans. 5s.

"The Man in Grey," by Barbara Toy and Moie Charles. Evans. 5s.

"Women of Twilight," by Sylvia Rayman. Evans. 5s.

"King of the Castle," by Mabel and Denis Constanduros. French. 4s.

"No Monument for Mark" and *"Cuckoo in Connemara,"* by Kate O'Brien. Stacey. 4s. each.

"Bachelor Brothers," by E. Eynon. Evans. French. 4s.

"Love and the Other Thing," by Gwenyth Jones. French. 4s.

"Murder in Motley," by Ingram d'Abbes and Fenn Sherie. French. 4s.

"Dragon's Mouth," by J. B. Priestley and Jacquetta Hawkes. French. 5s.

"September Tide," by Daphne du Maurier. French. 5s.

The popular notion that "if a play's any good, it will get produced" (propagated largely, I suspect, by successful dramatists) is most disputable in respect of the Higher Drama. But in the lower reaches it is surprising how much does get produced—these plays, for instance, give evidence of world premières in Bolton, Hayes, Ventnor, Preston, and elsewhere. Most of them are domestic comedies, all of them are published with a view to amateur societies as much as "reps," and to apply the big critical stick here is as pointless and uncharitable as scolding an end-of-term show for falling below West End standards. Besides, many amateurs have a special range of enjoyment not known to professionals: all that glitters is not Geldud. Many good judges hold that amateurs should attempt nothing but masterpieces, yet the fact remains that targets are usually modest. Accept, therefore, that almost all of these plays can give a good deal of pleasure in ways that are no less

genuine for being unpretentious.

Arnold Ridley's comedy about a television-afflicted suburban family is prefaced by some useful remarks on the art of stage domesticity ("the parts should be played as *pleasantly* as possible"); but then each play in the admirably-printed Evans Bros. series carries helpful acting hints. Ian Stuart Black's fantastic comedy-thriller concerns two brothers plotting to remove an heiress-cousin: small cast, strong plot bulging with engaging implausibilities. Yvonne Mitchell's study of a Jewish Juliet and Gentile Romeo in the East End during the blitz has pith and quality well above average. *The Man in Grey*, Eleanor Smith's famous novel in yet-another dress, is in different vein: preposterous historical melodrama about Clarissa, who "combines untouchable innocence with the dignity of a great lady" (Margaret Lockwood in the film-version) and the Marquis of Rohan, the Regency rake to end them all (James Mason). Also "strong" but in a realistic vein is Sylvia Rayman's dark, depressing, yet oddly accomplished study of a boarding house for unmarried mothers: a film advert characterised them deliciously as "women who loved too well too soon." All-female cast, but I refuse to forecast what its appeal may be to amateurs.

Back to safe little comedies with Mabel and Denis Constanduros, two old hands making affectionate fun of a film-struck family. Then two very Oirish comedies by Kate O'Brien; reasonable sets and casts, but remember you have to keep up the accent for three acts. The same applies to Welsh in Eynon Evans's guileless, good-humoured piece. Gwenyth Evans clearly aimed at the cosy genre of Shaftesbury Avenue country-house comedy, and at least got as far as Windsor Rep.

Murder in Motley came to town, as it deserved, being a good comedy-thriller of the school of *A Murder Has Been Arranged* which uses the actual theatre

as the scene. Then a trout among minnows, the Priestley-Hawkes "dramatic quartet" which eschews set and action in favour of situation and talk, talk, talk; yet the product of two exceptional minds and well worth attention. Lastly Daphne du Maurier's immensely successful piece about a widow's love-affair with her son-in-law, conducted in a vein of coy, novelettish comedy and dainty daring that I alone seem to find indecent, dull, and rather contemptible. PETER FORSTER

Children's Plays—American

Children's Plays (various, 75c. each) and "Children's Theatre Manual." The Children's Theatre Press, Cloverlot, Anchorage, Kentucky.

This is a most refreshing series of unpretentious plays. They have practical notes on the settings, costumes, and stage-management based on what was found practicable in the original production. The Manual deals with the organisation of Children's Theatre in a thorough manner. There are twelve fairy tales, eleven favourite stories from different countries, and six specifically American plays. The fairy plays are charmingly simple, with effective dialogue and genuine characters. Ten are old favourites, but two are original. *The Christmas Nightingale*, by P. M. Groff, has a picturesque setting and a plot about a charcoal burner and a long lost son who is found again during a puppet show on Christmas Eve. There is a generous offer in this copy; producers who are interested in presenting the entire Szopka or puppet show written in the style of the miracle play, may be sent this script and also the translation of the carols. *Peter the Pumpkin Eater*, by M. B. King, is a gay affair in a Pumpkin House. The simple but unusual singing and musical effects are an added attraction.

The most unusual and exciting plays are in the American group. *Daniel Boone* (L. Baptist), *Tom Sawyer* (S. Spencer), *Huckleberry Finn* (C. Rickert),

and, particularly, *The Indian Captive* (C. B. Chorpenning). The theme of this play is the courage of a little girl taken captive by the Indians, and tells how, through this quality, she wins their respect and gains her freedom. This group of plays impressed me by the fact that they stress the importance of character and the acceptance of responsibility without being ostentatiously moral. They avoid priggishness and manage to make virtue more dramatically exciting than vice. There are too few plays of this type written for the age group which urgently needs them.

The action and dialogue of these plays make reasonably high demands but there is a more important point. Themes of this quality provide a significant dramatic experience for the young players, leading them on from fairy stories towards an adult appreciation of classic plays.

LYN OXENFORD

Children's Plays—English

"*Youth Theatre*," Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. Ed. Cyril Swinson. Black. 3s. each.

"*Curtain Up*," by Thomas Cain. London University Press. 2s. 5d.

"*The Princess and the Swineherd*," by Nicholas Stuart Gray. O.U.P. 7s. 6d.

"*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*," by Margaret Carter. French. 2s.

"*Bluebeard*," by Trudy West. French. 3s.

Among the books in this batch are several publications of special interest to those concerned with plays for children to act. Such readers will be only too aware of the difficulties involved in taking a seriously educational line on drama. On the one hand there is the need to encourage the dramatic play which is natural to children and demands no script. On the other, the importance of introducing young people to the great plays of the world. Those who have tried to do both will know that it is not easy. Who can say when boys and girls are ready to move outwards from their own

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dramatic idiom to the work of Shakespeare or Shaw? In this dilemma it is often felt that some intermediate stage should be tried, so that children may make contact with the technique of the theatre without getting into waters too deep for them.

Among to-day's publications are some useful experiments in making plays to be acted by young people which show a thoughtful approach to the problem. The authors have been at pains to use words which come easily to a modern tongue and have, in many cases, tried to lead the players gently towards great dramatic material, which, it is hoped, may re-enter their lives in another form later on. Two qualities are well illustrated in a play called *Admetus* in *Youth Theatre Series*, No. 3. The immortal story of Alcestis unfolds itself in colloquial dialogue, easily understood by the young if it rings oddly in an adult ear.

ADMETUS: Hercules, however shall I thank you?

HERCULES: Don't bother to.

This series appears in four volumes, dealing, in brief plays, with well-known themes, sometimes by actual extract. It is intended for secondary pupils and youth clubs.

Curtain Up also makes a useful contribution, with its suggestions for practice in acting. The little plays are planned to take ten minutes in performance, some with a mixed cast, others for boys or girls only.

From plays designed for young people to act, we turn to plays designed for their amusement. *The Princess and the Swineherd* is a full-length play with ten characters, all delightfully real people. The fairytale is re-created in the idiom of to-day, light-hearted and humorous, with more than a hint of deeper meaning. Mr. Gray well deserves his established reputation as a playwright who understands what a young audience is like.

Children are the accepted audience for Pantomime, and two pantomime books are among recent publications.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears (in three acts) is well in the seasonal tradition. *Blue Beard* (three acts) is called a basic pantomime, and is ingeniously suggested as a framework for topical and local gags, which the author considers to be the heart of this national entertainment.

D. M. HAMMONDS

Religious Plays

"*The Window*," by Lesbia Scott. S.P.C.K. 7s. 6d.

"*A Time to be Born*," by P. D. Cummins. Deane. 2s. 6d.

"*The Young Stranger*," by Eileen A. Arthurton. London University Press. 1s. 3d.

"*Old Testament Stories*," three scenes by J. E. Eagles. Epworth Press. 1s.

"*Storm at Westminster*." A play in twelve scenes by E. M. Almedingen. O.U.P. 6s.

Those to whom the words "Church Pageant" conjure up wearisome memories will welcome the fresh approach of the author of *The Window*. By displaying "a handful of jewels from the treasure of the Church's experience" she sets out to convince its members that they belong to an organisation dwelt in by the Holy Spirit of which they have just cause to be proud. The twelve episodes (each of which can be performed singly) are linked by the arguments of a couple of workmen—giving the sentiments of the "man in the street" of the period—and a clerk. The stage represents part of a church and in the background is the window which pictures the theme of each episode.

A Time to be Born is a simple and at the same time an unusually robust and imaginative Nativity Play for a cast of adults and children. In *The Young Stranger* we are shown Christmas Eve in a Welsh kitchen. "Anything will come true if you believe in it enough," says the shepherd telling them the old legends, and outside in the snow the miraculous comes to pass.

The idea of making *Old Testament*

Stories living and real to children by the use of colloquial language is excellent. Unfortunately the pompous phrases which creep in sometimes spoil the effect.

Storm at Westminster is taken from Anglo-Saxon Chronicles of 1125 and concerns the fortunes of three erring clergymen and one licentious papal legate. This rather ribald, but amusing and very able verse play can scarcely be looked on as "religious" drama!

KATHLEEN BAINBRIDGE-BELL

Shorter Notices

"*Ben Jonson*," Vol. XI, ed. C. H. Herford et. al. O.U.P. 42s.

"*A History of English Drama*," Vols. 1-3, by Allardyce Nicoll. C.U.P. 35s. each.

The University Presses once more supply our permanent needs. Oxford completes the authoritative edition of Ben Jonson with a volume containing his literary records, a commentary, notes and index. Cambridge republishes the first three of Professor Nicoll's six volumes which, expanded and brought up to date, will constitute the complete history of our Drama from 1660 to 1900.

"*Dance and Drama in Bali*," by Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies." Faber. 63s.

This is a reprint of a most beautifully produced book by two great enthusiasts who know and love the people and the land of Bali, and it gives a vivid picture of the culture and beauty to be found there. Walter Spies has not only studied and noted the music and dance drama which are described, but is responsible also for all but two of the really magnificent photographs.

Everyman's Library has reprinted, in its new larger format (7s. each) *Sophocles* and, in two volumes, a complete *Ben Jonson*. Five of Jonson's plays also appear in a World's Classics volume (7s. 6d.). The standard edition of Eugene O'Neill's plays (Cape, 10s. 6d. each) now includes the unproduced *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. To Heinemann's Drama Library are added *Three Medieval Plays*, *The Government Inspector*, and *A Month in the Country* (4s. 6d. each). Norman Marshall has edited three of the greatest *Restoration Comedies* as a Pan Book (2s. 6d.).

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REPERTORY ENTERPRISE

An increasing number of new plays are given their premiere by provincial repertory companies; below we note some of those produced during the first quarter of 1953. We hope from time to time to print further lists, and so that we can give fuller details of interest to societies seeking new plays, we should welcome help from readers.

BRISTOL Little Theatre. *Rapier Players. The Man With Expensive Tastes.* 3 f., 7 m. (Sylvester Ord's study, Mill Hill).

HASTINGS, White Rock Pavilion. Strand Productions. *Aunt Hattie.* Comedy by Mary Campbell 6 f., 5 m. doubling some parts (with flashback to 1899). *Lady Susan*, by Joanne Holbrooke from Jane Austen's novel. 4 f., 4 m. *The Sea Tower*, by Rolf King from Hugh Walpole's novel. 4 f., 3 m. *Spring Collection.* Satirical comedy by Anthony Brook. 6 f., 5 m. (characters include vendeuse, rich woman, dress designer, etc.).

IPSWICH Theatre Company. *The Purple Fire Eaters*, by Charles Fenn. 3 f., 10 m. (French Garrison; French and Native soldiers, etc.).

LEATHERHEAD Theatre Club. Under-30 Group. *Follow the Plough*, Comedy by R. F. Delderfield. 4 f., 7 m. (kitchen of West country farmhouse).

LEICESTER, The Saxon Players. *The Blue Angel*, adapted by Edgar K. Bruce from the film. 5 f., 10 m.

LIVERPOOL Repertory Company. *The Pet Shop*, by Warren Chetham-Strode. 6 f., 4 m. (preparatory school early 1930's; later, house in London).

PERTH Theatre Company. *Lowland Fling*, by Ann Alexander. 3 f., 7 m.

RICHMOND (Surrey) Repertory Company. Richmond Theatre, *The Green. Colorado Beetle*, by Roger Linden. 3 f., 5 m., one set. *A Gentleman's Daughter*, by Aimée Stuart. 6 f., 2 m. *Goodnight Sweet Prince*, by McIlvor Goyder. 4 f., 5 m. (including ballet).

SHREWSBURY Repertory Theatre. Beacon Players. *All Our To-morrows*, by Steven Holt. 3 f., 6 m. (American Bar in hotel at foot of the Liebhorn). *All That Glitters*, by Pat Keysell. 7 f., 4 m., two scenes (back garden of Dean's house and Jennifer's flat). *A Folly*, by Sacha Guitry, adapted by Lucienne Hill. 3 f., 2 m. (doctor's consulting room, Paris).

WORTHING Theatre Company. Connaught Theatre. *Guardian Angel*, by Guy Bolton, from the French of Alfred Savoir. 5 f., 6 m.

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PETER PHILP: <i>The Castle of Deception</i>	7s. 6d.
F. SLADEN-SMITH: <i>All Change for Peterborough</i>	5s. 0d.
H. C. G. STEVENS: <i>Immortal Garden</i>	4s. 6d.

ONE-ACT PLAYS

MURIEL AND SYDNEY BOX: <i>The Truth About Women</i>	1s. 6d.
CHARLES CAUSLEY: <i>How Pleasant to Know Mrs. Lear!</i>	1s. 6d.
FREDA COLLINS: <i>The Fortieth Man</i>	1s. 6d.
ALFRED EMMET and BARBARA HUTCHINS: <i>Portrait of a Mother</i>	2s. 6d.
JUANITA HAYES: <i>The Impromptu Magazine</i>	2s. 6d.
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LYN OXENFORD: <i>Design for Movement</i>	8s. 6d.
CHARLES THOMAS: <i>The Dramatic Student's Approach to his Make-up</i>	6s. 0d.

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The Director of the British Drama League gives news of the activities of the League and its Members

London Theatre Week

Welcome to all those who are coming, from all over the world, to share in this occasion! We hope to report the highlights of the Week in our next issue, for those who cannot be present. Two additional attractions can be announced here. On Tuesday afternoon, May 26, at 2.45 p.m., a production "in the round," with O.U.D.S. actors, by Frank C. Davidson, of New York, will be shown in the new Mahatma Gandhi Hall at 41 Fitzroy Square. This performance of *The Glass Menagerie* was highly acclaimed at Oxford. On Sunday, May 31, Mr. Ronald Watkins invites us to the first dress rehearsal, at 2.30 p.m., of his Elizabethan-style *Julius Caesar* at Harrow School. These events are open to members of the B.D.L. and season-ticket holders only. For details apply to the League's Secretary.

Opera and Ballet

The management of Sadler's Wells is willing to show delegates over the Theatre one afternoon during the Theatre Week. Will all who wish to see behind the scenes at this historic theatre send their names to me so that a party can be arranged. Those who wish to stay on to the evening performance can have a light meal at the canteen on the premises.

Coronation Season at the Wells is from May 5 to June 20. The Opera Repertoire during the Theatre Week will be *La Traviata* (Monday); *Die Fledermaus*, with ballet (Wednesday and Friday); *The Immortal Hour* (Thursday and Saturday); Ballet Repertoire: *La Fête d'Etrange*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Les Rendezvous* (Tuesday and matinée Saturday). For a programme of the full season apply Sadler's Wells, Rosebery Avenue, E.C.1, sending a stamped envelope.

The National Festival

In shortening the course of the Festival the organisers are this year hoping to ease the progress of winning companies who, in the past, have felt the strain of keeping their productions "on the boil" until the end of June. By the time this issue appears the Area Finals will be almost over and the National Final imminent. The twenty-first of its kind, it will be held at the Scala Theatre on May 30, immediately following the London Theatre Week and only three days ahead of the Coronation. The judges this year will be Michael Langham, Ken Tynan, and Wendy Hiller.

Tax Exemption

The thanks of all amateurs are due to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for altering the conditions of exemption from Entertainment Duty so as to allow an amateur company to employ a professional producer or instructor. This is good for the professionals, who gain employment; for the amateur actors who get skilled assistance, and for the audience who get better shows. We are grateful to N.O.D.A. for their pertinacity in pressing with us for this reform, and hope that in due course the musical side of their work may obtain similar relief. Societies should note that it is still necessary to apply for exemption.

Library Assets

After receiving her M.B.E. from the Queen's hand, Miss Briggs gave a luncheon party to all who had been on the League's staff for over ten years. It was hard to believe this when looking at either Enid Foster, who is Assistant to the Librarian and also keeps the Bookshop, or at Patricia Pate, who is in charge of the hire of sets of plays. Since they came to Fitzroy Square on leaving school both have married, one

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Terence Rattigan

THE GIFT

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THE MOUSETRAP

Agatha Christie

THE WHITE SHEEP OF THE

FAMILY

L. du Garde Peach and Ian Hay

THE YOUNG ELIZABETH

Jennette Dowling and
Francis Letton

UNDER THE SYCAMORE TREE

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The three undermentioned plays will be available for amateur production as from October 1st, 1953. The acting editions will be published July 1st.

THE HOLLOW

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to a former member of the staff, but happily neither has left for that reason though Mrs. Pate was away in the W.R.N.S. for some time. These two friends preserve a cheerful efficiency and give sound advice to the many members who seek their help in choosing plays and books.

The Library has acquired an asset of another kind by the gift of thirty-seven volumes of theatre programmes dating from 1882 to 1938. These were collected by the late Mrs. "Nell" Higson. She was a lifelong friend of Ellen Terry, and of this friendship was born a devotion to the theatre which took her to almost every "first night," and often caused her to visit a play many times. Managers would make a custom of keeping her favourite front-row stalls for her; and among every branch of the profession she had innumerable friends, as her Birthday-book, now also in the Library, bears witness.

Full-Time Course 1953

This Course, now in its seventh year, steadily consolidates its position. Numbers are limited to twenty-five selected students, and by now about 150 men and women have taken it. There has always been a proportion of students from abroad, for visitors from overseas who want to make a special study of the theatre find in the Course a concentrated experience of all types of dramatic work, and the chance to make contact with both the professional and amateur approach to play-production. For example, this year's visiting lecturers included—from the West End theatre: Mr. John Fernald, Mr. Michael Langham, Mr. Michael MacOwan, and Mr. Norman Marshall, all speaking on their recent productions; from the U.S.A.: Mr. William Schallert (University of California) and Miss Muriel Sharon (Y.M.H.A. Children's Theatre, New York); from Paris: M. Azaria and his company in a mime demonstration.

The students responded to their varied programme with zest and enterprise. In a dramatic experiment to explore the nature of the theatre in three media—drama itself, movement and music, colour and light—they produced some striking original work

both individually in their designs and collectively in their group movement. Effective mime work emerged from the given theme of conflict in three aspects—man versus supernatural forces, man versus society, and man versus his own nature. In the technical sessions students constructed, canvassed, and painted a complete set of flats and made properties and costumes for their "end of term" production of Chekhov's *On The High Road*. Producers need to be reminded of what it feels like to act, and these student-producers were eager for this refreshment. Together they created a sensitive, atmospheric, and exciting performance. The team-work of the silent-footed, deft-handed backstage crew operating in a nutshell of space was as remarkable as that of the actors letting loose their emotions on a tiny stage, deliberately overcrowded.

All these activities, together with their study of theatre history, period movement, music and costume are helpful as preparation for the Drama Board's examination which about a dozen students now attempt each year. Many need the Course in their work as producers of amateur groups, youth leaders, or lecturers; some of them have obtained work as drama advisers and tutors; a few have found their way into the professional theatre; but the majority are school-teachers assisted by their Local Education Authority to attend. Gradually their influence, particularly in the matter of a widened outlook, should make itself felt in the maintenance of artistic quality in all types of amateur dramatic work.

FRANCES MACKENZIE

A Fine Performance

On March 16-18, at the Fortune Theatre, the Midland Bank Dramatic Society successfully presented Terence Rattigan's *Playbill*. An outstanding feature was Charles Trott's performance as Crocker-Harris in *The Browning Version*. Mr. Trott last played for the Society in 1946, and those who looked forward to his return were not disappointed. The part was handled with great delicacy and the rare finish one has learned to expect from this player.

IN THE PRESS

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A New Play

The Berkeley Players are a Jewish group, notable for enterprise and youth. Their enterprise is apparent even from their programme notes, which have dared to replace the stiff and colourless prose customary for such occasions by an idiomatic, slightly exclamatory style, suggesting letter-writing of an unforced, friendly order.

More enterprising still is their choice of a play new to Britain. *Birthright* portrays a German-Jewish family confronting the first few months of Nazidom. The author, Richard Maibaum, a Jew of German origin, has handled this terrible subject with considerable dramatic effect, and what is perhaps more remarkable, has handled it without rancour, thereby offering an experience which though painful is also extremely moving to Jew and Gentile alike. It would be good if other companies were to give it a wider hearing. It should be rewarding to act, for the Eisler family is rich in well contrasted suggestions of human nature, only waiting to be filled out to life-size by players with a zest for exploring and creating character.

The Berkeley Players themselves, being as has been said very young, had a little trouble in making clear which generation of the family was which, but this blemish apart, they gave a wonderfully sincere, warm, deeply-felt rendering of the play.

A. L. PATTISON

A New Opera for Youth

The *première* in Europe of Alec Wilder's short opera *The Lowland Sea*, designed primarily for colleges, schools, and community groups, was given on March 14 by a combined cast of boys and girls from the Farnham Grammar Schools. Previous to this it had only been performed in America.

The Lowland Sea is extremely vocal; sea shanties have been strung together, or used with spoken words in between songs to give the plot. It is orchestrated in a mixture of the dissonant and concordant styles, giving colour and heightening the emotional expression. Young people to-day are well able to sing right through this texture

without being aware of difficulty. The opera is not easy instrumentally.

There is a sense of poetry in the simple story. The Sailor, Johnny Dee, departs for Singapore in the "Scarlet Sail" leaving behind his betrothed, Dorie. A widower with three children proposes to Dorie, who refuses him. Three years later the "Scarlet Sail" returns without Johnnie, who is ill

Wilder's "Comic Strip"

Thornton Wilder runs amuck in *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Mankind skates through the Ice Age only to drown in the Deluge. Unshaken by Act of God it survives World War and is left once more to face the trials of Reconstruction. Wilder treats his mammoth theme with a gay inconsequence which completely disarms the spectator,



THE PETRIFIED FOREST. A scene from the Dunlop Dramatic Society's production of Robert Sherwood's play. This was the first amateur production of the play in the Midlands.

with malaria. News comes of a storm that has sunk the "Scarlet Sail" with all hands. Dorie marries the widower and Johnnie returns too late. After a poignant farewell between the lovers, the curtain descends on a domestic scene round the lighted lamp on the table. Only Dorie is aware of her private grief.

The cast gave a lively performance, though the spoken words were sometimes difficult to hear owing to the accompaniment of wind and brass.

ELSIE McNAUGHT

and like a prodigal fairy godmother he takes the audience back stage and the actors front of house. It is hardly surprising that the company, the Play and Pageant Union of Hampstead Garden Suburb, was left by the end rather short of breath. The production must, however, bear part of the blame. It lacked precision of timing, a clear delineation of the changing phases and failed to weave the external effects into the internal structure of the play.

The author's language is not as profuse as his imagination and whilst more than

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adequate for the fun and games, lacks distinction in the serious passages. At a climactic moment in the last act, Mr. Antrobus, mankind's epitome, is called upon to evoke the image of war. He is given the line: "In the middle of all that blood and dirt and hot and cold." Prepared to shiver, I found myself thinking rather snugly of rugger scrums and the Eton wall game. In these circumstances it is to the credit of the leading actors that they succeeded in convincing the audience.

Perhaps Wilder's greatest achievement in this play is to create the character of Sabina—the perennial *Erdegeist*, with the ways of a glamour puss and the heart of a skivvy. Miss Maureen Simmonds gave the impression of being nearly as good as her part. In the second act she has to wear the briefest of costumes, which reminded me how difficult it is to wear nakedness on the stage. It is not unusual to find a young actress with prize-winning legs, but how rare to find one who can act with them. Such finesse Miss Simmonds still has to acquire. With training and experience she can learn to be quite as good as her part. When training classes are filled with the best young actors then the future of the amateur theatre will indeed be promising.

ROBIN ROOK

The Croydon Players

It is always with trepidation that one sees revivals of plays one admired in "the old days." They seem often to have dated almost overnight and, paradoxically nothing seems so remote sometimes as the immediate past. In our time the gap between the thirties and the present day has been widened by a world war and by a social revolution.

I had not seen or read *The Moon in the Yellow River* since it was first produced in London at the Haymarket in 1934. Its recent production by the Croydon Players showed, however, that Denis Johnston's play has grown old gracefully. Although concerned with "the troubles" which now belong to Ireland's past, it is so forcefully written and so strongly conceived in terms of the theatre that it retains its old power to grip an audience. It is a curious play;

without any romantic love interest, concerned only with the conflict of tired half-believed-in ideals—on the one side Tausch, on the other Darrell Blake, and between them Dobelle as a kind of Nihilist umpire. Much of the play is written in full ironic comedy and the shooting of Darrell at the end of Act II still comes as a terrible surprise. Only the end with its hint of happiness to come raises a doubt. Is it not a little too neat? Can people alter so?

At the Croydon Town Hall this play was given a good straightforward production by the Croydon Players, whose choice of play shines always like a good deed in a naughty amateur world. It was well staged and consistently well acted especially by the players of Dobelle, Tausch, Commandant Lanigan and Agnes, the housekeeper, whose every line expresses that ancient contrariness of Ireland which so bewitches and exasperates her admirers.

DONALD FITZJOHN

Australian Plays for London

I recently spoke to the new Society of Australian Writers about the problems of the playwright, and helped to work out a scheme for showing Australian plays in London. Four leading figures in the theatre have agreed to help. They are Mr. Cyril Hogg (of French's), Mr. T. C. Kemp (*Birmingham Post*), Mr. Norman Marshall (producer), and Miss Margery Vosper (play agent). With four of the Society's members—Dymphna Cusack, Hugh Hastings (author of *Seagulls Over Sorrento*), Ralph W. Peterson (author of *The Square Ring*), and Trafford Whitelock (producer)—they will form a panel to read scripts.

Because of practical difficulties the scheme will at first be limited to Australian playwrights resident in Europe, but later it is hoped to extend it to Australia.

E.M.B

Frank Newman for N.Z.

We are happy indeed to hear that Frank Newman, till recently a B.D.L. Staff Tutor, has been appointed Producer of Christchurch Repertory Society, New Zealand. We wish him and the Society all success in their work together.

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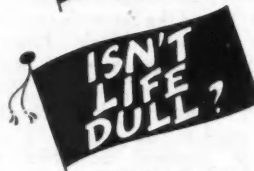
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New Zealand Branch

At this Branch's Annual General Meeting, held in February last, the President made a lively speech of which the following is an extract. Mr. Campbell's picture looks discouraging, but the Annual Report he presented gave proof of the vigorous spirit which animates New Zealand's theatre-lovers.

The only regular theatre that New Zealand has known for the past twenty years has been the amateur theatre. "Repertory" groups and Little Theatre societies have struggled against all odds to serve the public, and have served them well, with little encouragement from Civic Authorities or the press. During this period few (if any) live theatres have been built, though close on a hundred cinemas have been opened, sometimes robbing the live actors of the only available hall. In travelling through this country one finds a miscellaneous set of uncomfortable, inefficient, badly equipped and really old-fashioned buildings, misnamed Opera Houses or Concert Chambers. Few of these are properly equipped with resources of modern stage-craft, and few provide adequate comfort for the customers, let alone the actors. The Civic Authorities have let culture go by default.

Within recent years the State has begun to recognise the part played by the amateur movement and a little (a very little) financial help has been granted. When one thinks of the huge sums which the public has paid in Entertainments Tax (£309,000 last year), one wonders how long the live theatre can remain quiescent while no portion is returned to it. At least 10 per cent. of the tax should be devoted to the setting up of State Scholarships in Drama, the creation of Theatre Fellowships, monetary support where necessary to New Zealand theatre companies employing New Zealand actors, and (perhaps most important) the establishing of a Chair of Drama within the University system which would, among other things, teach the elements of play-writing. I believe that it will not be possible to have a National Theatre in New Zealand until playwrights have learned to present the New Zealand way of life in the New Zealand idiom.

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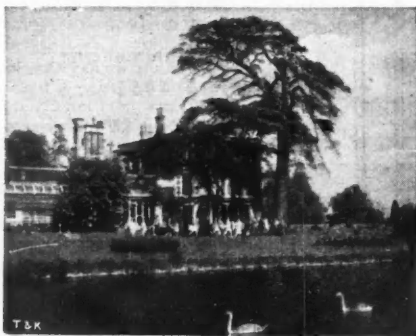
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